

The next Employer Forum conference call will be held on Thursday, February 12, 2004 from 1P.M. to 2 P.M. (EST). In Room S2-06-21 for the onsite personnel.

**Agenda:** This month we have scheduled presentations by Ondrea Clay, Joan Kral, and Jim Mayhew on the provisions in the Medicare Prescription Drug, Improvement, and Modernization Act of 2003 that provides for subsidy payments to sponsors of retiree prescription drug programs. Retiree prescription drug plans are usually a part of a general employer sponsored retiree health plan that is supplemental to Medicare Parts A and B. While approximately one-third of the Medicare population has drug coverage through employer sponsored retiree coverage, as the baby boom generation retires and costs continue to rise, fewer Medicare beneficiaries will have retiree coverage to supplement Medicare. Through this provision, Medicare will be subsidizing a portion of the employer retiree drug costs, which may assist in at least slowing the trend of eroding benefits and allow more seniors to retain the retiree benefits. The subsidy payment will reduce existing burdens on employer and union sponsored retiree health plans. In addition to providing a subsidy to sponsors of qualified retiree plans as defined in the provisions, it also allows employers to reduce costs by coordinating retiree drug coverage with Medicare.

To join the conference call, please call 1-877-387-5070 and tell the operator that you would like access to the "Forum" chaired by Mark Koepke (which will really be Spencer Schron).

Future Employer Forum calls are scheduled for 1 P.M. to 2 P.M. (EST)

March 11, 2004

April 8, 2004

May 13, 2004

The continuation of the Employer Forum via these calls is vital to CMS. We would appreciate hearing from you about future topics for calls and if previous calls met your purpose. Please send me an email at [bburrier1@cms.hhs.gov](mailto:bburrier1@cms.hhs.gov) and let me know how you grade us.

In addition, if you have any suggestions for future Employer Forum Conference calls, and cannot get me, please contact Steve Wojcik of the National Business Group on Health at [wojcik@nbgh.org](mailto:wojcik@nbgh.org) or 202-775-1812, Kelli Moler of the National Coalition on Health at [kmmoler@aol.com](mailto:kmmoler@aol.com) or 202-775-9300, or Larry Borres of the Midwest Business Group on Health at [lboress@mbgh.org](mailto:lboress@mbgh.org) or 773-380-9090.